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**RAPE AS A FORAGE CROP IN THE COTTON BELT.**

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Rape is a succulent, nutritious plant, closely related to kale, collards, and cabbage, and requires essentially the same conditions of culture as these crops. The plants grow to a height of 1½ to 4 feet, depending on conditions of soil and climate. The best forage varieties do not bloom the same season they are planted. It is the most important plant of the cabbage family to use as feed for hogs, sheep, cows, and chickens, and for this purpose should be much more commonly grown. Practically only one variety is grown in the United States, namely, the Dwarf Essex. The seed is quite cheap, usually retailing at about 10 cents per pound.

**TIME OF SEEDING.**

Rape is a cool-season crop, and in the South should, therefore, be planted in the fall or in very early spring. The crop is not injured by ordinary winters in the South, but of course the growth is slow in cold weather. In the fall it is best seeded from August 15 to October 15. Later seeding is scarcely advisable, except near the Gulf coast and in Florida, where it may be sown up to December 15. In the spring it should be seeded just as early as danger of freezes is past; that is, at about the same date spring oats are sown. The earlier seedings nearly always give the largest yields, as growth is checked when very warm weather occurs. In summer the plant becomes much less palatable. Fall seeding is best, but early spring sowing is often successful. Spring seeding is never advisable in Florida or near the Gulf coast.

**SOIL PREPARATION AND CULTIVATION.**

Rape succeeds best in rich loam soils, but profitable crops are grown on sandy and on clayey soils. An abundant moisture supply is necessary to produce large yields. Good preparation of the seed

NOTE.—Intended for farmers in the cotton belt who desire to diversify their farming because of the economic crisis which adversely affects the cotton crop at this time.

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bed is advisable. Barnyard manure is the best fertilizer. In the absence of this, 400 to 600 pounds per acre of a complete commercial fertilizer may be used.

When rape is planted in wide rows it should be given three or four cultivations during its early growth. After cutting the first crop a second growth is often obtained, especially if the stubble is cultivated.

#### METHOD OF SEEDING.

Rape may be sown in cultivated rows, in narrow drill rows, or broadcasted. If planted in rows, these should ordinarily be 24 to 30 inches apart. In rows 28 inches wide, which is the best average width, 2 pounds of seed per acre are sufficient.

If drilled with a grain drill 4 pounds of seed per acre are required. When broadcasted 5 or 6 pounds per acre should be used.

Rape may be successfully grown with certain other crops. Thus, it may be sown in early spring on oats, wheat, or rye, and usually a good stand is secured after the grain crop is cut. It may also be sown mixed with clover, to be used as pasture, or between the rows in some winterkilled crop for late fall pasture.

The best depth to sow the seed is about one-half inch.

#### USES OF THE CROP.

Rape is most commonly used as a pasture crop for hogs or sheep. Cattle eat it readily, but destroy considerable by trampling, especially where the rape is broadcasted. In broad rows the injury by trampling is less, as animals usually walk between the rows. Many animals do not like rape at first, but must acquire a taste for it before they will eat it readily. Salt should be supplied liberally, as this will tend to prevent the purging which rape often produces.

In pasturing cattle on rape care must be taken to prevent bloating. They should not be turned into a rape pasture when it is wet with dew or rain or when the cattle are very hungry. If a supply of hay or straw is kept convenient, cattle will instinctively turn to this when they begin to bloat. Where animals can pass readily from rape pasture to grass pasture, cases of bloating are very infrequent. On the whole, it is best to avoid danger and not pasture cattle on pure rape. There is no danger of bloating with hogs.

Rape may also be cut and stall fed. If fed to dairy cows, it should be just after milking, as otherwise it may taint the milk.

Rape is also an excellent feed for all kinds of poultry.

#### RAPE FOR HUMAN FOOD.

Rape is quite as good for human food as kale or collards, and may be prepared in the same manner. It is often grown for human food under the name of smooth or spring kale.

## YIELD.

Rape varies greatly in yield, according to the soil. Yields of 30 tons per acre, green weight, are not rare. Ten to 15 tons is a good yield, and smaller returns are profitable.

Under favorable conditions rape is ready to pasture in about eight weeks after seeding. An acre of good rape will easily supply pasture for 20 hogs for two months.

